

Ernst Klee

## “Turning the tap on was no big deal” – The gassing doctors during the Nazi period and afterwards

In the nursing and convalescent home at Hadamar near Limburg in Hesse, more than ten thousand sick and handicapped people were driven into the gas chamber in 1940/41 because they were regarded as “ballast”. The gas chamber (2.5 by 4.5 metres) was camouflaged as a shower room. Benedikt Härtle, an orderly, said: “When ninety (people) were transported in, they stuffed ninety in there”<sup>1</sup>. The administrative assistant Maximilian Lindner, who had watched a gassing through a peep-hole in the outer door and been unable to bear the sight: “The manner of death was so excruciating, that there was no question of a humane (!) killing”<sup>2</sup>.

The ten thousandth body in Hadamar was celebrated with music and drunkenness. Hedwig Sauer, a former teacher, on life in the murderous institution: “They all lived in debauchery, and intercourse also took place with some women and girls from Hadamar”<sup>3</sup>.

At the beginning of 1946, former employees from Hadamar reported to the police that one of the doctors involved was a Dr Gorgaß: “He was notable”, said one of the women, “by the fact that he was almost always drunk”<sup>4</sup>. Administrative assistant Lindner: “Dr Gorgaß was a short fat man, early thirties and wore glasses ... he was a great lover of alcohol”<sup>5</sup>.

The man the police were seeking was arrested in the Hotel Turm in Ludwigshafen in January 1947. He had moved in there under the name “Dr Gerber”. Hans Bodo Gorgaß, born the son of a senior inspector of the railways on 19 June 1909 in Leipzig, admitted without any excuses, that he had been ordered “to perform the services of an executioner”<sup>6</sup>. Later, his colleagues in murder would regret that Gorgaß had defended himself with so little skill. Bodo Gorgaß: 1929, entry to medical studies (and membership of the students’ club “Germania”), 1931, interruption of his studies because his father, mother and sister were in a psychiatric home. After that, everything went up-

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hill for him: 1933, became a member of the SA, 1935 final examination, 1936/37, worked in the psychiatric institution at Eichberg (where so-called euthanasia was openly advocated already at this time), 1937, joined the NSDAP. In August 1938, Gorgaß became the chief doctor of the Kalmenhof mental home and reform school in Idstein/Taunus (where children and young people were later murdered). In December 1939, Gorgaß joined the Army, in spring of 1941, he was categorized as “indispensable”. He was to report to the head of the Hesse institutions department, Bernotat, who told him that he “had been chosen for great things, it was an extraordinarily honourable task. I should feel proud to have been found to be particularly suited and reliable for it.”<sup>7</sup> Gorgaß, flattered at being so important, travelled to the Berlin Chancellery of the Führer, where the murder of the sick (“euthanasia”) was being organized under various disguised names.

In Berlin, Gorgaß discovered that “useless mouths” were to be eliminated: “the nation’s best were falling at the front; this negative selection of the war had to be countered. Apart from this, it was necessary to take this step in the interests of those at the front, otherwise bitterness could easily arise among the soldiers, who felt that they were in deadly danger day and night while at home, elements useless to the nation were protected and pampered”<sup>8</sup>.

Gorgaß does not seem to have had any concern in Berlin that he might one day have to gas his own mother. But he must have had some doubts that doctors were not supposed to operate the gassing apparatus: “The Berlin gentlemen declared that they had to insist that this function be carried out by a doctor”<sup>9</sup>.

The newly won colleague first went to the Austrian institution Hartheim near Linz, where he spent several weeks being instructed as a gassing doctor. Before he began at Hadamar, Gorgaß also spent a few days learning at the gassing institution Sonnenstein in Pirna. The director there, Horst Schumann, took him to Buchenwald, where sick and politically undesirable concentration camp prisoners (camouflage designation “14f13”) were selected for Schumann’s killing institution. Gorgaß about the selection in the concentration camp: “The people were simply presented to us with the assertion that they were mad.” He was later outraged at the accusation that he had behaved like a butcher in Buchenwald and not like a doctor.

On 18 June 1941, he began in Hadamar. Gorgaß on his activity: “My job was merely the carrying out of the killing”<sup>10</sup>. “The Berlin central office stopped the gassing campaign at the end of August – since the killing of sick people had long been a well-known secret and had led to outrage among the population. The staff and technical equipment were moved to the extermination camps in

<sup>1</sup> Statement by Härtle of 9.3. 1946 (the so-called Hadamar Case, Prosecutor General Frankfurt/Main, henceforth quoted as: 4a Js 3/46 GSA Ffm.)

<sup>2</sup> Statement by Lindner of 6. 4. 46, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Statement by Sauer of 14. 2. 46, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Statement of 26. 2. 46, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Statement by Lindner, loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup> Statement by Gorgaß of 8. 2. 47, loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Statement by Gorgaß of 7. 2. 47, loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Gorgaß on 17. 2. 61 (Case 10 Js 38/60, State Prosecutor’s Office, Dortmund).

the East (Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka). Murders did not continue again in Hadamar until 1942: the sick were allowed to starve to death, or poisoned with tablets and injections. Margarethe Borkowski, a nurse at Hadamar, tried to represent this as a "release" in 1946, but had to admit "that after the administration of the poison, many suffered terribly and their death was not easy. . . . It was horrible for us and we were very sorry, but we did not undertake anything against it!"

Murders continued in Hadamar until the Americans were at the gates of the institution. Among the victims were numerous Jewish patients (1941), so-called Jewish mixed race children, "Aryan" patients (probably including seriously wounded soldiers) and Eastern workers who had contracted tuberculosis, who the employment offices got rid of in this way.<sup>12</sup> But Gorgaß was not there to see this any more, since he was conscripted into the Army in 1942. Yet in the few weeks he worked in Hadamar, he murdered "at least" a thousand people. The Frankfurt District Court sentenced him to death for this on 21 March 1947.

The executioner of Hadamar, however, had his sentence commuted to life imprisonment. Life imprisonment ended in January 1958. At this time, many of his companions in murder were still living unrecognized in liberty. Gorgaß went home to his wife, who he had met as a nurse in the psychiatric institution in Eichberg (Rheingau). He took a job in the scientific section of a pharmaceutical company and settled in Behel (Bielefeld), near the von Bodelschwingh Institute (for the mentally retarded).

### *The Organization of Mass Murder*

In the case against Gorgaß and other accessories to murder at the Hadamar institution, the court had outlined the entire procedure of the murder of the sick as early as the beginning of 1947. What was missing was the – admittedly embarrassing – pre-history: it was not the National Socialists who had invented the "destruction of life unworthy of living" but honourable scholars – lawyers, doctors, theologians, teachers –; had loudly demanded the eradication of "inferior beings" long before the "seizure of power".<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Statement by Borkowski of 14. 2. 46 (Case 4a Js 3/46 GSia Ffm.).

<sup>12</sup> In May 1945, the Frankfurt/Main police began a case against the head of the Frankfurt district employment office, Ernst Kretschmann. Remains of this case form volume 21 of the Hadamar files. Investigations show that especially female workers from the East were "re-deployed" for household duties for party officials and "men of commerce". Eastern workers with TB were sent to Hadamar by the district employment office. All files were burnt before the Americans marched in.

<sup>13</sup> On the history of "euthanasia", see Ernst Klee, "Euthanasie" im NS-Staat. Die "Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens", Frankfurt/Main, 1983; Ernst Klee, *Dokumente zur "Euthanasie"*, Frankfurt/Main, 1985; Kurt Nowak, "Euthanasie" und Sterilisation im "Dritten Reich", Cöttingen, 1980.

The best-known example is the paper by the lawyer Karl Binding and the psychiatrist Alfred E. Hoche, "The Lifting of Controls on the Destruction of Life unworthy of Living", published in 1920 and comprising only 62 pages. The two professors considered it a painful idea that the care of people with severe mental illnesses was using up capital in the form of foodstuff, clothing, heating and personnel costs. Already in 1920, they talked in terms of "empty human shells", "ballast persons" and "the spiritually dead".

Binding and Hoche were writing under the influence of the First World War and the subsequent economic disaster. They therefore complained that the capable had fallen at the front while the inferiors had survived at home. These were ideas already put forward by others before them, and they were taken up in the following years by public and private health organizations. Branding the later victims as "pests" who were "pillaging" the welfare system occurred before 1933. As a rule, the only thing that was debated was whether the "inferior people" were to be placed in an asylum, that is locked up, sterilized or even put to death. The terrible slogan of the "life unworthy of living" comes from middle class scientists and welfare practitioners. The National Socialists had merely to make use of their vocabulary and ideas.

It was only a few months after the "seizure of power" that the mass sterilization of those with allegedly congenital illnesses began; this claimed approximately 400 000 victims by 1945. After the seizure of power too, the amounts paid per patient in psychiatric institutions were lowered to starvation level, and there were at least isolated incidents of patients being killed by resident psychiatrists. The planning of the systematic killing began in February 1939, at the latest, in the Führer's Chancellery, in a department of the party.

The Führer's Chancellery was under the control of "Reichsleiter" Philipp Bouhler, a former professional officer and one of the "old fighters" of the party. At this time Bouhler held the rank of "Obergruppenführer" of the SS (corresponding to Lt.-General in the British Army). He was party member number 12 and had been awarded the Order of the Blood. Of the five principal sections of the party chancellery, it was Principal Section II (Matters relating to State and Party) that became responsible for killing the sick. "Oberdienstleiter" (Brigadier or Colonel) Viktor Brack, an economist who had joined the National Socialists in 1923, was in charge. Brack outlined clearly the aims of the "euthanasia" programme in the Doctors' Trial at Nuremberg: "Ultimately, Hitler aimed . . . to eliminate those people who were maintained in lunatic asylums and similar institutions and who were no longer of any use to the Reich. These people were regarded as useless mouths, and Hitler was of the opinion that by annihilating them, an opportunity would be provided for making more doctors, nurses and other personnel as well as equipment available for the use of the army".<sup>14</sup> (Bouhler committed suicide in May 1945, Brack was sentenced to death in the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial and executed.

<sup>14</sup> Statutory declaration by Brack of 12. 10. 46 (Nuremberg Document NO 426).

his deputy Werner Blankenburg lived under a false name in Stuttgart until his death in 1957).

In the summer of 1939, Böhler and Hitler's personal doctor Karl Brandt (like Brack, he was tried and executed in Nuremberg) were assigned the carrying out of the so-called campaign. Well-known professors and directors of institutions were consulted for advice. At the end of July 1939, Böhler announced to a group of 15 to 20 doctors that, while Hitler had rejected an euthanasia law for reasons of foreign policy, anyone who took part in a programme would be safe from prosecution. No one would be forced to participate – a promise that was kept.

The doctors discussed the types of people to be killed, the procedure for registering the victims and the best killing method. Carbon monoxide (CO) was agreed upon. The plans were complete in September 1939. Since the Führer's Chancellery could not be used as a "business plaque" for killing sick people, a central office was founded, which was called "T4" after its later address in Tiergartenstrasse 4. The individual departments of T4 wrote letters, negotiated and gave orders under different letterheads. The organization of the killings took place under the letterhead "Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft Heil- und Pflegeanstalten" (Reich Working Party for Nursing and Convalescent Homes). The transport of the death candidates was handled by the "Gemeinnützige Kranken-Transport G. m. b. H." (Charitable Transport of the Sick Co. Ltd.), abbreviated to "Gekrat", using post buses and the railways. The chief commercial section, responsible for instance for the wages of the assistants to murder, operated under the title of "Gemeinnützige Stiftung für Anstaltspflege" ("Charitable Foundation for Institutional Care"). A "Reichsausschuss zur wissenschaftlichen Erfassung von erb- und anlagebedingten schweren Leiden" ("Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Inherited and Inherent Serious Illnesses") organized the killing of handicapped children. Later, a "Zentralverrechnungsstelle Heil- und Pflegeanstalten" ("Central Accounting Section for Nursing and Convalescent Homes") was founded, which billed the families or other organizations for the murders. A swindle involving millions; alleged payments were charged for patients long since murdered.

All the company names were, as mentioned above, those of phantom organizations. In all cases, it was Principal Section II of the Führer's Chancellery that was responsible. The only State instrumentality involved was Section IV (Health and Care of the People) in the Interior Ministry. Those responsible here were Dr Leonardo Conti, Secretary of State for Health and Head of the Doctors' Association (suicided October 1945) and assistant secretary Dr Herbert Linden (suicided April 1945), who acted as the intermediary between the Ministry and T4 (in October 1941 he was appointed "Reich Commissioner for Nursing and Convalescent Homes").

Some time in October 1939, the exact date is not known, Hitler signed a text that had been revised many times by those responsible in T4. It consists of a

single sentence, written on a page with Hitler's personal letterhead: "Reichsleiter Böhler and Dr Brandt are commissioned under my responsibility to extend the duties of doctors to be named in such a way that patients considered incurable as far as can be judged and after the most careful assessment of the state of their health may be granted mercy killing." This so-called "euthanasia-enabling" by Hitler was back-dated to 1 September 1939, the day war broke out.

The systematic murder of patients began with the attack on Poland. The first victims were patients of institutions in Pommern, West-Prussia and Poland. They were murdered by being shot one at a time by SS detachments, a procedure that took hours. Thus, for instance, the mental home in Stralsund was handed over to the SS in December 1939. Also, by December at the latest, gas trucks were in operation, using gas bottles. In Chelm-Lubelski, on the other hand, the patients of the asylum were mown down by machine-gun fire.

While the mass murder of mental patients was already running at full speed in Poland, the doctors of the establishments for gassing were ordered to the former prison in Brandenburg/Havel to attend a trial gassing. The effects of various poisons were tested on some of the victims before they were gassed. The actual annihilation operation began on 18 January 1940 in the gassing institution at Grafeneck in the Swabian mountains.

The selection of the victims took place according to an evidently deliberately dilittante procedure: all the institutions were obliged to notify Berlin of all those patients who could be given only mechanical work or none at all. They also had to notify about those suffering from schizophrenia, epilepsy, diseases of senility or dementia, the so-called criminally insane and patients who had been institutionalized for more than five years. Each sheet was processed by three T4 experts and one senior expert. All of them were instructed to decide in the patient's disfavour. They passed the death sentence without having seen their victims.

If the victims – who often fought desperately and screamed – were taken to one of the gassing institutions (Grafeneck, Brandenburg, Hadamar, Bernburg/Saale, Sonnenstein, Hartheim), they were murdered immediately on arrival. They were obliged to undress (supposedly for showering), photographed naked and then brought before a doctor, who looked at them seeking a plausible cause of death. After that, they went to be "disinfected" (jargon of the perpetrators). Once the people in the gas chamber were dead, the gold was broken out of their teeth and sent to the Degussa company for processing into fine gold. In the dissection room, which adjoined the gas chamber, many of the victims' brains were removed and sent to the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institute in Berlin. After that, the corpses were burnt several at a time and the ash distributed among a number of urns. Sometimes, the families even received two urns.

According to internal T4 statistics, exactly 70 272 persons were "disinfected"

up until 1 September 1941<sup>15</sup>. At the end of 1941, the killing technology of T4 was placed in the service of the extermination of the Jews. More than one hundred euthanasia assistants from the institutions and the Berlin central office were posted to the extermination camps at Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka. They built the gas chambers and organized the killings. T4 also supplied the camp commandants. The personal files remained in Berlin. At regular intervals, the culprits and their wives were able to relax from their murders in a holiday home (now a hotel) belonging to the organization on Lake Atter in Austria. When the extermination camps were dissolved in the autumn of 1943, the T4 staff were transferred to the Trieste area in order to make this area "Jew-free" as well. What began with the eradication of the sick, aged and handicapped, who were allegedly unworthy of life, ended with the holocaust. The murderers of the sick provided not only the staff, but above all the method - gas chambers disguised as shower rooms. Everything that happened in the "extermination of the Jews" had been copied from the murder of the sick<sup>16</sup>.

But the killing of the sick continued between 1942 and 1945. Only the method changed: the patients were either allowed to starve to death or else the already weakened patients were driven into a lethal pneumonia by inconspicuous overdosing with drugs (Luminal was one frequently used). The inventor of this method was Professor Paul Nitsche who had tested his Luminal system on Leipzig patients as early as 1940. He was executed in Dresden in 1948.

### *The "Prosecution"*

There were fourteen doctors of whom it is known that they worked in gassing institutions. Of these, four died during the war: Dr Ernst Baumhardt (Grafeneck/Hadamar), Dr Friedrich Berner (Hadamar), Dr Günther Hennecke (Grafeneck/Hadamar) and Dr Curt Schmalenbach (Sonnenstein). Two

<sup>15</sup> On 27. 6. 45, an American officer found 39 sheets with statistical information relating to the gassing operation in a steel drawer in Hartheim (the number of those "disinfected" listed for each of the "euthanasia" institutes and calculations as to how much had been saved in terms of food etc.). The statistics were produced by one Edmund Brandt (after 1945 he was with the Federal Interior Ministry in Berlin) for Prof. Karl Brandt, Hitler's personal doctor and the man in charge of euthanasia (statement of 4. 12. 70 in case Ks 2/70 GSA Ffm.). One copy of the so-called Hartheim Statistics is in the GSA Ffm. (Document Collection "euthanasia"). The statistics for the individual institutions have been published in Klee, *Dokumente zur "Euthanasie"*, p. 232.

<sup>16</sup> In depictions of the holocaust, the central role of "euthanasia" for subsequent developments is often overlooked. T4 did not only develop the killing method but also systematically murdered all Jewish patients after 1940. The selection criteria for "Aryan" patients - basically their ability to work - were not applied to Jewish victims. The criterion "Jew" was a death sentence.

doctors committed suicide: Dr Rudolf Lonauer, director of the institution in Hartheim, killed himself in May 1945. Dr Imfried Eberl, director in Brandenburg and Bernburg (and first commandant in Treblinka), hanged himself in February 1948 while in prison awaiting trial.

Gorgall, the gassing doctor of Hadamar, was arrested in January 1947 and sentenced in March 1947. His was to remain an isolated case. After this, it was four years before the next gassing doctor came to the attention of the law at least temporarily: Horst Schumann, the most notorious of all the "euthanasia" doctors. His name stands for gruesome human experiments:

Horst Schumann, born on 1 May 1906, the son of a practising doctor in Halle, had joined the NSDAP in 1930 and the SA in 1932. Like his father - who had become a party member before 1930 - the son joined the student club Budissa in Halle. When he was recruited for the "euthanasia" programme in the autumn of 1939, he discussed the matter with his father (despite a secrecy order) and, after a week to consider the matter, accepted. In January 1940 he took over the direction of the gassing institution Grafeneck (Swabian Mountains) and in June 1940 that of the Sonnenstein institution. Schumann: "The people were gassed as soon as they arrived". At the same time, he also selected concentration camp prisoners who were to be gassed in T4-institutions. It was reported about his selection activity in Auschwitz that his "gentle manner of addressing the prisoners with the formal 'Sie'"<sup>17</sup> had contributed particularly to the deception of the concentration camp prisoners (they hoped they were going into a sanatorium).

In the autumn of 1942, Schumann was ordered to Auschwitz again. He was to test the mass sterilization of Jews by means of x-rays. Once again, he was described as being "calm, proper and polite"<sup>18</sup>. He chose his test persons himself. They were always young, healthy, good-looking Jewish men, women and girls who looked like old people afterwards. The parts of the body that were treated with the rays were burnt, suppurating. Often the intestines were also affected. Many died. Part of Schumann's control tests, to check whether the radiation had worked, was the so-called semen check: a stick covered with a rubber hose was inserted into the rectum of the victim and the glands stimulated until ejaculation occurred so that the ejaculate could be tested for sperm.

As a "success test", Schumann had the testicles removed from the x-rayed men and the ovaries from the women. These operations were undertaken on an assembly-line basis, in the presence of the next victim. Those who survived Schumann's x-ray castration survived as crippled human beings ruined for life.

<sup>17</sup> Statement by Schumann of 7. 6. 68.

<sup>18</sup> Stanisław Kłodzinski, "Erste Auschwitzer Selektion ins Gas", in: *Ärztliche Rundschau* (Organ der Cracower Abteilung der polnischen ärztlichen Gesellschaft), Cracow, No. 1/1970.

<sup>19</sup> Dr Tadeusz Paczula on 2. 12. 70 in the Public Sitting of Criminal Court III in Frankfurt (against Schumann).

In October 1945, the concentration camp doctor moved to Gladbeck, where his wife – who he had met in the gassing institution Sonnenstein – was already officially registered. Schumann registered with the authorities in April 1946, even though his Auschwitz human experiments were being discussed in the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial just at that time. He quickly became established, working as a sports doctor, doing locums and, with the aid of a refugees' loan, opened his own practice. In July 1950, he became the Miners' Guild doctor for the Ruhr miners. Soon there was a rumour in the town that Schumann was being sought for crimes against humanity. That was hardly surprising since four former "euthanasia" assistants came from Gladbeck. At the end of January 1950, Schumann became cooky. He applied for a hunting and fishing licence at the town clerk's office. The town administration – as is bureaucratic custom – therefore requested an extract from the criminal records of his birthplace, Halle. A few days later, the news arrived from Halle that Schumann was being sought by the state prosecutor's office in Tübingen.

The town clerk's office took a few days to notify the police. The state prosecutor's office in Tübingen took a few more days to consider the matter, and the criminal police in Gladbeck also hesitated for a few days before finally deciding to arrest Schumann. So it was that 21 days had passed before the criminal police arrived at Schumann's house and discovered from his wife that the man they were looking for had reckoned with being arrested and had departed.

Schumann remained lost as far as the authorities were concerned until, on 20 April 1959, the Federal Criminal Police received an anonymous tip that they might cast a glance at an article in the magazine "Christ und Welt". A few days previously, an article had appeared there which showed a photo of a bush doctor in Li Juba, a place "where the Sudan, the Congo and French Equatorial Africa meet". The unsuspecting reporter wrote: "there, with his wife, lives the loneliest German I have ever met ... For eighty thousand people spread over endless distances, Dr Schumann is the only doctor. Since the hospital is situated directly on the border to French Equatorial Africa, he also stamps the passports and commands the police." Rarely, wrote the reporter, had he found a German couple anywhere in the world so satisfied with their work.<sup>20</sup>

After the reporter's visit, the Schumanns were in a hurry to cross the border. The concentration camp and gassing doctor was finally tracked down in Ghana where he lived for the next few years under the protection of President Nkrumah. In August 1966, a district court in Accra decided that Schumann's crimes "the details of which make your blood curdle", were not political crimes, as had been maintained by the defence. The Supreme Court of

Appeal in Accra also called Schumann's arguments "the stereotypical testimonies of nearly all Nazi criminals".<sup>21</sup>

The African lawyers passed their judgement with a clarity that was sometimes absent in German courts in Nazi cases. Schumann got his revenge after his deportation (Day of Repentance and Prayer, 1966) with a series of articles on Africa. Admittedly the audience was limited to readers of the prisoners' newspaper in the Butzbach prison in Hesse. In these articles, the concentration camp doctor Schumann presented himself as an old racist ideologue, he expressed the opinion that the "unsatisfactory achievements of the blacks in nearly all areas" can be attributed to the "absence of any kind of selection principle". He even asked whether "the blacks are intelligent at all".<sup>22</sup> The prison censorship, normally so finicky, saw no reason to intervene. But Schumann, not content with relapses into racist ideology, became a critic of African medicine: "Everybody knows how good and encouraging it is for the patient to hear something more than just the professional things from the doctor or the staff, a good word, a discussion of personal matters, a pat on the shoulder or something like that. Nothing of the sort! A lot of arrogance ... and little humanity".<sup>23</sup>

Subsequently, Schumann convinced the doctors that he suffered from high blood pressure. He claimed that his ability to concentrate and to think ("especially when playing chess"<sup>24</sup>) had declined. Schumann's fellow-prisoners reported how the former euthanasia doctor had "assisted" his blood pressure. But the word of the jailbirds did not weigh anything against the expert opinions of famous doctors. Schumann was released from the prison in July 1972. He died on 5 May 1983 in Frankfurt.

An absurd special case among the doctors of the gassing institutions is that of Dr Georg Renno ("Turning the tap on was no big deal"<sup>25</sup>): in the Austrian institution Hartheim, a former castle, he promoted German house music. Ursula Zimmermann, a T4 employee stated in 1955: "I had a certain amount of personal contact with Dr Renno. I was interested in his playing of the flute and the accordion. There was singing on some evenings, some girls took part. Dr Renno played one of his instruments ... I also recall that Dr Renno sometimes played his flute in the internal courtyard of Hartheim Castle on Sunday mornings".<sup>26</sup>

Georg Renno, born on 13 January 1907, the son of a clerk in Strasbourg, joined the NSDAP in 1930 and the SS a year later – out of love of music, if

<sup>21</sup> Judgements and translation located with the files for the case against Schumann (Js 18/67 GSIA Ffm.).

<sup>22</sup> Die Sonde, eine Zeitschrift von Gefangenen für Gefangene, ed. by the Butzbach Prison, December 1967.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, January 1968.

<sup>24</sup> Specialist internal medicine report of 6. 4. 71.

<sup>25</sup> Statement by Renno of 3. 2. 61 (Js 18/61 GSIA Ffm.).

<sup>26</sup> Statement by Zimmermann of 7. 9. 65 (Js 16a/63 GSIA Ffm.).

<sup>20</sup> Giselher Wirsing, "Menschen und Mächte am Äquator", in Christ und Welt, No. 16/59.



we can believe Renno: "I was recruited for the SS by an acquaintance who knew that I was a flautist and needed me for the SS-Music section".<sup>27</sup> His first job was at the Prinz-Luitpold-Home for children with tuberculosis in Scheidegg (Allgäu). A newspaper in 1933 reported on a concert of the 'National Socialist Womens' Group: "The Sonata in B flat by Frederick the Great (1712-1786) for flute with piano accompaniment made great demands on the soloist, but Dr Renno surmounted them in a masterly fashion".<sup>28</sup>

Renno had become a psychiatrist "because I valued a permanent position".<sup>29</sup> Renno, promoted to deputy director at Hartheim in May 1940, on the institution: "The rooms and the position of the castle appealed to me".<sup>30</sup> To his surprise, he seemed to be suitable to play the part of the "euthanasia doctor" in a "documentary film" on the murders of the sick. Renno's explanation: they were looking for a doctor "who spoke relatively good High German".<sup>31</sup> But the film was never shown. All copies were evidently destroyed before the arrival of the Allies.

At the end of the war, Renno moved to Ludwigshafen (T4 had obtained its bottled gas from IG Farben there). At first, he took over a practice in Groß-Bockenheim belonging to a doctor who was still a prisoner of war: "no one asked me about a certificate allowing me to practise".<sup>32</sup> Nor could he have provided one: "I registered officially under the name of Dr Georg Reining, born 10.2.1910 in Ludwigshafen/Rhine. I had used this name ever since I crossed the border from Austria to Germany. At that time all I had was my driver's licence. I merely falsified my signature from Dr Renno to Dr Reining by placing a dot on the first half of the first 'n' making it into an 'i'; similarly with the second part of the second 'n'; I made a 'g' out of the 'o'. The remaining parts of the licence . . . I burnt in such a way that they could be read only with difficulty or not at all".<sup>33</sup>

As "Dr Reining" he obtained new papers and a job as a scientific employee with Schering AG. In January 1955 "Dr Reining" transformed himself into Dr Renno once again: "I had revealed my January 1955 change of name to my employer, who took no exception to this; probably because I was now able to supply my licence to practise, etc."<sup>34</sup>

For six years, Renno covered clinics (in Mainz, Ludwigshafen, Mannheim and Homburg/Saar) as a travelling salesman. In October 1961 he was arrested. He immediately began to complain of his terrible state of health („almost

intolerable pain"<sup>35</sup>). The prison doctor of the institution where he was held in custody hurried to declare in a statement: "Dr Renno can have hip or full baths here".<sup>36</sup> What other prisoner had experienced gaol as baths?

In January 1962 Renno was released from custody. It took until August 1969 before his trial began. But there was no sentence. After seven months of trial, Renno was declared "unfit for trial". In March 1970, the case against him was dropped temporarily and finally in December 1975. Fourteen years later, Austrian television sent a photographer to Renno's house, as they were making a film about Nazi psychiatry. The photographer delivered his photos: they show Renno engaged in hard physical work in the garden.<sup>37</sup>

Apart from Renno, five other euthanasia doctors were discovered between 1961 and 1963. The first was the Stuttgart gynaecologist and obstetrician Dr Aquilin Ullrich, who was employed in gassing in the institution Brandenburg/Havel. He was arrested on 22 August 1962 and released again on 8 September – the longest period in custody to which any of the five was subjected.

Several months later, on 12 April 1962 Ullrich's student friend, Dr Heinrich Bunke, gynaecologist in Celle was arrested. Bunke, who worked at Brandenburg and Bernburg/Saale was detained for seven days. On 13 June 1962, the head of the section for internal medicine of the city hospital in Uetersen (near Pinneberg/Schleswig-Holstein) Dr Kurt Borm was arrested. Dr Borm, formerly T4-doctor in the Sonnenstein gassing institution, remained in custody until 29 June. Dr Klaus Endruweit, general practitioner, resident in the Hartz village of Bettrum, was arrested on 20 June at 10.40 a.m. Endruweit, former T4-doctor in Sonnenstein, left the court buildings again at 5.30 p.m. on the same day.

The last to be discovered was the general practitioner Dr Ewald Wortmann; he was asked to make a statement on 21 March 1963. Wortmann's name appears in a T4 staff list from May to the end of October 1940 in the category "Doctors in the (gassing) institution".<sup>38</sup> He claims, however, that he was present "for a little more than two or three days, perhaps something like two weeks" in Sonnenstein, when the transports arrived. After that, he claimed to have refused to work for T4 any longer.<sup>39</sup> The prosecution believed him. Wortmann was not indicted and is still practising as a doctor.

On 3 October 1966 the case against Ullrich, Bunke and Endruweit was to be-

<sup>27</sup> Statement by Renno of 7. 11. 61 (loc. cit.).

<sup>28</sup> The article bears the heading "Scheidegg and Environs" and is dated 10. 10. 33. The name of the paper is not visible.

<sup>29</sup> Statement by Renno of 31. 10. 61 (loc. cit.).

<sup>30</sup> Statement by Renno of 1. 11. 61 (loc. cit.).

<sup>31</sup> Statement by Renno of 4. 2. 65 (loc. cit.).

<sup>32</sup> Statement by Renno of 7. 11. 61 (loc. cit.).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Letter of Renno's defence lawyer of 1. 11. 61 (loc. cit.).

<sup>36</sup> Statement by the prison doctor to the "Director of the House" of 9. 11. 61 (loc. cit.).

<sup>37</sup> Peter Nausner: "Unwertes Leben, ein Bericht über die NS-Psychiatrie in Österreich von 1938-1945", Programme shown on 30. 7. 84.

<sup>38</sup> Originally in the Archive of US-Army Headquarters, War Crimes Branch, BJ. 127891f. Now known as the Heidelberg Documents (after the place they were found) in the Zentrale Stelle Ludwigsburg, among other locations. Facsimile in Klee, "Euthanasie" im NS-Staat, p. 228f.

<sup>39</sup> Statement by Wortmann of 6. 8. 65 in the district court Marne (4 Gs 116/65).

gin in the Frankfurt District Court (investigations against Borm were still continuing because he was still working for the murder organization at the end of the war). But first there was a debate as to whether the accused doctors were to be permitted to continue to practise. More than 5000 citizens from Celle and environs – a member of Federal and one from State Parliament among them – took up Bunke's cause, with success. Bunke was permitted to go on practising.

Endruweit too enjoyed the support of many colleagues and citizens, of the local sporting club, the Lutheran old people's home, the Hoheneggelsen Savings Bank, the Local Bank of Hildesheim-Marienberg, of the municipalities of Söhlde, Groß-Himstedt and Bettrum. The mayor of the municipality of Nettingen wrote angrily to the chairman of the regional council in Hildesheim, who had ordered the suspension of his appointment: "Already, and in numbers that cannot be ignored, there are embarrassing comparisons, very damaging to the reputation of the government, being made with the arbitrary measures adopted by the 3rd Reich"<sup>40</sup>.

After a trial lasting several months, the judgement was handed down: the mass killings were murder. No civilized nation had ever carried out such an operation. There were no justifying reasons. Dr Ullrich had been an accessory in the murder of at least 1815 mentally ill persons ("of these he personally killed at least 210"). Dr Bunke an accessory in the murder of at least 4950 and Dr Endruweit of at least 2250 mentally ill persons.

Thereupon all three were acquitted: "The accused did not, however, act in such a manner as to make them guilty. They had no awareness of its illegal nature. They did not recognize the 'illegal' aspect of their deeds and acted in an inevitable misconception of the commandments. The accused assumed that they were involved merely with the killing of mentally ill patients 'without any natural will to live' and the killing of such persons was allowed"<sup>41</sup>.

Three years later the Federal Supreme Court overturned the judgement. For reasons of "trial economy", the case against Dr Borm was now combined with the Ullrich case. The trial was to take place at the end of 1971. But already in July an expert report arrived from Celle, according to which Bunke had had a heart attack and there was danger of a further attack if he was placed under psychological stress. Ten days before the case was to begin, a similar report arrived from Stuttgart stating that Ullrich's health would be endangered by a renewed trial. Some three weeks after the start of the trial, Endruweit had a heart attack certified. Of the four accused, only one remained, Dr Kurt Borm. His colleagues might well have regretted their illnesses, since Borm was acquitted on 6 June 1972, almost ten years after his arrest.

Kurt Borm, born the son of a senior city official in Berlin on 25 August 1909, had joined the NSDAP in 1930 and the SS in 1933. According to his statement, he came to join the SS via the student club Obotritia in Rostock. Among other units, Borm served in the SS guard unit "Adolf Hitler". The judges in the Frankfurt District Court regarded the SS-doctor as not being responsible because, in the years "when he was growing up, during the formation of values and of an understanding of his environment" he had heard hardly anything other than "the glorification of National Socialist ideas". While Borm had "objectively been an accessory in the killing of at least 6652 mentally ill persons", he did not have "an awareness of its illegality"<sup>42</sup>.

The Federal Supreme Court confirmed the acquittal on 20 March 1974. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* commented on 22 March: "The way the Second Criminal Court of Appeal sees it, a National Socialist had to have been fanatical enough; accessory to murder can then be excused". In an Open Letter to the then President of the Federal Republic, Gustav Heinemann, Norbert Blum, Heinrich Böll and others wrote: "Whether he is conservative or progressive, no human being on earth could help shuddering at the favouring of mass murderers and their ideas"<sup>43</sup>.

#### *The last "euthanasia" trial in Frankfurt, 1986/87*

Henceforth Ullrich, Bunke, Endruweit were certified as being medically "unfit for trial" at regular intervals. At the same time, they continued to carry on their medical practices, Bunke until 1979, Ullrich until 1984, Endruweit until 1986.

It thus appears that the Frankfurt courts took more than ten years to recover from the acquittal of Borm. On 29 January 1986, the case against the three was to be taken up again. Dr Klaus Endruweit, born the son of a senior teacher of the deaf and dumb on 6 December 1913, did not even appear. Medical certificates excused him. Both Dr Aquilin Ullrich, born on 14 March 1914 the son of a senior teacher, and Dr Heinrich Bunke, born 24 July 1914 the son of a primary school teacher, insisted at the beginning of the trial on their poor health (though in all the preceding years this did not prevent them from practising).

The court met them half-way. Proceedings were to take place for two hours only once a week. And every time one of the accused requested a break in the trial or an early adjournment, the request was granted. Despite this, the trial moved rapidly at the beginning. The main reason for this was that the witnesses turned out to be brief. They either could not or did not want to re-

<sup>40</sup> Letter by the mayor (and president of the "Association of Exiles") of 12. 10. 66 (JS 15/61 GSA Ffm.).

<sup>41</sup> Judgement of 23. 5. 67 (KS 1/66 GSA Ffm.).

<sup>42</sup> Judgement of 6. 6. 72 (KS 1/66 GSA Ffm.).

<sup>43</sup> *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10. 6. 74.

member; after all, nearly all of them belonged to the group of those who were assistants to the deeds.

There was excitement on 9 April when Kurt Borm, who had been called as a witness, appeared in the company of two lawyers. "Only mentally ill patients were put to sleep", he said. He himself had merely "sat there reverently" when the "transports were dealt with". A question from the Bench as to whether the people put up a fight. "In no way whatsoever". These were completely stupid, totally degenerate characters who only babbled nonsense. The public were angered that the victims of murder were derided once again<sup>44</sup>.

At the end of November, the trial took a surprising turn: while the two doctors had previously refused to make any statements on the events relating to their actions, Dr Ullrich now said he wished to make a statement. Only the truth can liberate. Ullrich began his curriculum vitae with his ancestors. He said that he came from an old Catholic family, that before meals, the family prayed standing up and that his mother had accompanied the baking of strudel with fervent quick prayers. The audience got to hear what the beds were like in the "labour service" and what there was to eat there. When the presiding judge urged him to get to the essentials and to make an effort at least to narrate for half an hour in one sequence, he answered in a superior manner: "Madam President, you'll have to bide your time".

It went on for weeks like this. In February 1987, the euthanasia doctor had reached the year 1940, the year when he either personally gassed the patients or assisted at their deaths in the Brandenburg institution. Ullrich did not, of course, speak of gassing or killing, he spoke of putting to sleep, in order to make it clear that victims had been peacefully released from their sufferings.

At the time Ullrich was "putting the patients to sleep", he was married. The bride was a Protestant, he recounts, and this led to a break with his parents. Neither his parents nor the parents of the bride had attended the wedding. And when the first child had arrived, his parents had not even sent a congratulatory card. A few weeks later Ullrich's lawyer would apply for leave to present evidence that in the case of this religious accused - he had, however, left the church in the Nazi era - the Protestant-Catholic mixed marriage, the break with his parents and with the church had led to an inability to make proper judgements in accordance with Paragraph 20, 21 of the Criminal Code. At this application, the audience burst into laughter, because the former Paragraph 51 declares an accused free of any guilt if he is unable to recognize the wrongness of his deed as a result of, for instance, dementia or psychological deviance. In other words, Ullrich tried to avail himself of the same paragraph that would have sent him to the gas chamber in 1940.

For months, Ullrich presented himself as the noble helper. Even in the murder organization, which organized the killing of the sick, he only got to know

nice people. Only the victims came off badly - according to Ullrich, they were brutish beings, below (!) the level of animals. When the trial of the Nazi doctors began in Nuremberg after the war, the "benefactor" claimed to have become afraid that the Allies might torture him and subject him to a brainwashing ("Our people - myself included - did not regard the Nuremberg Trials as a properly constituted court"). Ullrich went underground with forged discharge papers, he became a miner in a mine in the Saar region. "After the first shift, I had two blisters", he recounted, "one on each hand". But he did not want to go to the hospital, he did not want to be the doctor, he just wanted to be a pitman, "one of the men". At this time he also worked for the Saar Radio and had done programmes on St Augustine. "And so", he reported solemnly, "my voice could be heard in large areas of the Reich". In his narration, he did not notice that the "Reich" had long ceased to exist.

He surfaced again in 1949. He became a doctor again and was able to involve himself in the "fervently loved service for others". He became a gynaecologist. Ullrich, who now presented himself like a country doctor out of a dreadful penny novel, describing a successful operation: "Death, who had already been looking around the labour ward, had to leave". But now the noble helper had made a mistake, he had confessed to his deeds. He regretted that and excused it as resulting from a feeling of comradeship with the prosecutor. On another occasion, the long examination by the magistrate was at fault. Ullrich: "A Sudanese you can question at such length, but not a Central European with the calibre of an intellectual". He claimed to have signed his confession without looking because at home there was a woman waiting to give birth, a woman who had been childless for ten years. But characterizing himself as the noble helper failed. The prosecutor showed him the record of interview, according to which Ullrich had not only read through his statement but had made corrections in it.

On the 49th day of the trial, Ullrich's lawyer Meub, who had rejected an expert psychiatric witness in this case on the grounds that the witness had a Jewish grandfather, applied once again to present evidence. This was to prove that Ullrich "in an excess of enthusiasm was filled with the idea" that he "had to help" these people. If one were wanting to be cynical, and it was easy to become cynical during this trial, then one would say that Dr Ullrich in the gassing institution Brandenburg felt himself to be like Dr Albert Schweizer in Lambarere.

#### *Understanding for the perpetrators, discrimination against the victims*

Ullrich claimed to have acted out of "love for his fellow man". And the deception of those to be killed was "in the best interests" of the victims. The Frankfurt professor of psychiatry Hans Joachim Boeckh wrote to Ullrich's lawyer Meub on 12 August 1986 that the "deception" had evidently served to

<sup>44</sup> I attended the trial and noted the statements down.



reassure and calm the victims. In this way they were spared fear for a short time and the orderly course of the killing action was facilitated for the murderers. The deception was thus a "humane aspect of the inhumanity of the total procedure" which could not be dismissed as cynical in the course of an evaluation. If the accused had felt themselves to be merely assistants in carrying out a killing procedure laid down by others, the deception of the victims was to be seen more as the "humanity of the hangman" than as "treachery".

A former patient of Ullrich felt quite differently. She had read in the trial reports in her local newspaper that, according to statements of the accused, only "empty human shells" had been killed. Sad and hurt, she wrote to the prosecutor's office about her older brother, who had had epileptic fits at intervals of four to six weeks. One day, her father had been ordered to take the boy to the psychiatric institution in Andernach. "I can remember clearly", the woman wrote, "that we visited my brother there. My brother loved me very much and always saved up all his presents for me. My father promised my brother again and again that he would be allowed to come home. He spoke to the doctors and was always fobbed off by them. My brother played the violin very well and kept on requesting that he be allowed to have his instrument, which was refused".

The boy died in Hadamar. His death destroyed the life of the whole family: "Believe me", the woman declared, "my entire childhood was overshadowed by this murder, my parents never laughed again. Right up until he lay on his death bed, my father reproached himself most terribly for having consented to having my brother even examined. . . . The pain was never lessened, because later there were these terrible reports, I can still see them in front of me, buses with curtained windows and those poor people inside. I repeatedly wondered what my brother thought, what he might have thought about my father whose word you could trust."

A tragedy such as this must have occurred in a similar way in many families. But Ullrich had his lawyer read out a statement that he had heard only from family members who were glad to be rid of those who had been killed.

The perpetrators had always pitied themselves. Thus Käthe Gumbmann, who had been a nurse in Hadamar, wrote as early as 1947: "There are always people who derive their pleasure from choking us a little"<sup>45</sup>. Sister Kneibler, who injected numerous people to death with her own hands, wrote in 1947 that what she had done, she could "answer for before God and all humanity. Never was I hard on people . . . I lived only for humanity. For that I have to suffer and suffer today"<sup>46</sup>.

It was those with simple natures, like the orderly Geiger, who tried to com-

<sup>45</sup> Käthe Gumbmann, in a letter stopped by the censor, dated 13. 7. 47 (Hadamar Case, loc. cit.).

<sup>46</sup> Pauline Kneibler on 24. 9. 47 to the Senior Prosecutor, *idem*.

plain about the psychological stress of being held in custody and wrote "You go mental to the dogs"<sup>47</sup>. But the doctors Ullrich and Bunke were unable to find any essentially different explanations forty years later. While Ullrich set himself up as the friend of the murdered victims, Bunke, who was mostly silent, appealed to obedience, duty and loyalty. He had been brought up "in the spirit of Kant", and his "sense of duty had been abused in the most treacherous way". In his concluding speech, Bunke spoke of a "formally fair trial". This evidently also means that the victims can be insulted in a despicable way. The protection the perpetrators enjoy is evidently not available for the victims. Those who were gassed as "unfit to live" have still not been recognized as victims of the Nazi regime.

The Ullrichs and Bunkes fared better. They lived on the mercy of a late arrest. Both were accused of the murder of thousands and were treated with care. They were permitted to practise even though their activities in the murder institutions were known. The woman mentioned above wrote: "It is not up to me to pass judgement. But is there any justice? Dr Ullrich was no doubt able to forget these horrors, he dwelt in a suitable house and no doubt had a good life. Perhaps he will be granted a remission of his sentence on the grounds of his age, but I . . . will not be able to forget it all my life."

The judgement was handed down on 28 May, 1987. The court found many reasons for being lenient: it mentioned the stress of the long trial (resulting from the defendants' being "unfit for trial") and considered that the accused had been "victims of their faith in authority", having not had any "education for being critical and resisting" in their youth. Thus it regarded four years' imprisonment as sufficient for being an accessory to murder in 4500 or 11 000 cases<sup>48</sup>. This is only one year more than the minimum sentence for being an accessory to murder in a single case. The accused were able to go home after the trial. Whether they will ever serve their sentences is doubtful, since the judgement is not yet final.

### Medical Ethics

In June 1987, a student of medicine wrote an "open letter" to the president of the Federal Chamber of Doctors, Dr Karsten Vilmar. The cause for the letter was the judgement against Ullrich and Bunke. The prospective doctor asked how the medical profession could permit doctors to practise who had broken the "highest ethical norm of medical activity", the oath of Hippocrates, tens of thousands of times in the most despicable way<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Ferdinand Geiger on 23. 6. 47 to the prosecutor, *idem*.

<sup>48</sup> The much higher number of victims is because the "Hartheim Statistics" (see above) was not known to the Frankfurt District Court at the time of the first judgement.

<sup>49</sup> Author has copies of the correspondence.

The letter appears to have raised Vilmar's blood pressure. He answered the young woman that her letter caused him to fear that she was unaware not only of historical facts, but also of "essential principles of our state under the rule of law". The president of the Federal Chamber of Doctors wrote: "The procedure you have suggested would, in my opinion, be indistinguishable from the arbitrary actions of the National Socialist rulers and their 'justice', since you also demand 'punitive measures' against the accused without any legal sentence by a properly constituted court."

Even without the sentence of a court it was known that Ullrich had personally gassed sick people. Bunke disputed this. But he could not dispute that he looked at the naked victims before they were gassed in order to enter a plausible cause of death in the papers lying before him. A doctor in the service of mass murder of patients – a more monstrous perversion of the medical profession is unthinkable.

Karsten Vilmar defended the doctors against accusations of collective guilt on several occasions. But it is not a question of collective guilt. Rather, the point is that doctors who were involved in medical crimes were permitted to continue virtually without interference after the war and that their professional association did not distance itself from them. When Bunke's involvement in the murder of patients became known, the regional chief administrator in Lüneburg in 1966 ordered the suspension of his appointment to practise. The doctor's association in Celle immediately showed its solidarity with Bunke. One of the Chief Medical Officers of the General Hospital in the Celle approached the Minister for Social Welfare in Lower Saxony in the name of many doctors and was received by him personally. The protests did not fail. In accordance with a decision of the Administrative Court, Dr Bunke was permitted to continue to practise, since, among other reasons, the doctors' association had supported him, as the grounds for the decision stated.

A further example: Dr Klaus Endruweit, who had also taken part in the murder of patients in Sonnenstein, was a member of the executive of the National Health Doctors' Association and of the executive of the Doctors' Professional Association in Lower Saxony for many years after the War. When the regional chief administrator in 1966 ordered the suspension of his appointment to practise, Endruweit received massive declarations of support from his colleagues. The Hildesheim regional office of the administration of the doctors' professional association of Lower Saxony disapproved of the step taken by the chief administrator. Endruweit was allowed to go on practising.

Another example: Professor Julius Hallervorden, histologist at the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institute in Berlin. He visited Dr Bunke in the Brandenburg institution when a transport of children was gassed. Hallervorden dissected some of the bodies on the site and took parts with him for scientific evaluation. He declared to the Allies in December 1946 that he had said at the time: "look,

chaps, if you are killing these people anyway, at least take their brains out so the material can be used!" Hallervorden, still quite impressed: "There was wonderful material among these brains, imbeciles, deformities and early childhood diseases<sup>50</sup>." The scientific robber of the dead died as a highly regarded medical man.

The extent to which renowned doctors went to protect a criminal among their ranks is shown by the case of Professor Werner Heyde. The medical director of T4 was able to work undisturbed from 1952 until his cover was blown in 1959 under the name of Dr Sawade. Heyde had set up in Schleswig-Holstein and become the most consulted expert (for the State Insurance Office and the State Compensation Office, for Welfare Offices and professional organizations). The "wild propagandist and leader of the slaughter of the mentally ill" (as the psychiatrist Professor Hans Creutzfeld put it in 1954)<sup>51</sup> was not betrayed. Professor Gerhard Kloos, Director of Psychiatry in Göttingen explained the protection of a criminal this way: "All of them were too collegial and decent to inform on a colleague and countryman to the occupying powers<sup>52</sup>."

In 1949 the executive of the Medical Practitioners' Association in Hamburg considered the question as to whether doctors who had killed (poisoned) handicapped children should have their licences to practise revoked. At that time, the result was: "The basic problem at issue here, that of euthanasia, has not been clarified in either the legal or the professional sense<sup>53</sup>." Many years later, in 1961, the 'problem' had been clarified. The executive of the Medical Practitioners' Association announced that the "actions" (1) "did not represent any serious moral misdemeanours in the meaning of § 4, Sect. 1, No. 3 of the Reich Medical Officers' Ordinance and thus . . . cannot be the basis for an application for revocation of a licence to practise<sup>54</sup>."

Karsten Vilmar told the medical student in no uncertain terms that only governmental bodies – the regional chief administrators – were responsible for the granting and revocation of licences. But he did not explain to her that the local medical officers' professional organizations could bring an action for the revocation of a licence. Nor did he explain that the Hamburg branch of the association considered the murder of children to be morally defensible. Nor did he waste a single word on the fact that those representatives of the profession who had supported the racial madness in word and deed had been able to return to the profession. For instance Werner Catei, a leading of-

<sup>50</sup> Nuremberg Document L-170.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted from the indictment against Dr Hans Heigl (Director of the Health Department in the Ministry of the Interior), of 21. 5. 60 (1/60 GStA Schleswig).

<sup>52</sup> Statement by Dr Gerhard Kloos of 27. 11. 61 (fs 148/60 GStA Ffm.).

<sup>53</sup> Quoted from: "Approbation wird nicht entzogen. Gemeinsame Erklärung der Hamburger Gesundheitsbehörde und der Ärztekammer Hamburg", in *Ärztliche Mitteilungen*, No. 5/1961.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

ficial in the murder of children (as the senior consultant and director of a killing ward). After 1945, he was able to become a professor of paediatrics again.

Or Dr Kurt Borm: he had not only participated in the "gassing" of at least 6652 patients, he had also selected mentally ill "law breakers" for the concentration camps ("extermination through work"). Similarly, he had organized several thousand ampoules of lethal medicines (e.g. morphine) used for the killing of patients. Borm maintains that he did not know that the ampoules were destined for the murder of the sick, although he had been employed in the Berlin central "euthanasia" office. Dr Kurt Borm, who had himself sent several thousand patients to the gas chamber, has been allowed to practise up to the present day in Uetersen (Pinneberg District).

Hans-Martin Lohmann

## Psychoanalysis under the Swastika

1

It has been only since the beginning of the 1980s that serious attempts have been made to research the history of psychoanalysis under the swastika. Typically enough, it was not a German researcher but the American historian Geoffrey C. Cocks, who had already begun to examine in more detail the fate of the Freudians under the Nazi regime on the basis of an evaluation of the material in the Berlin Document Center. He first published the results of his extensive research in 1975<sup>1</sup>.

West German psychoanalysis today are organized in two associations, the "Deutsche Psychoanalytische Vereinigung" (DPV, German Psychoanalytical Association), which is affiliated with international Freudian orthodoxy, and the "Deutsche Psychoanalytische Gesellschaft" (DPG, German Psychoanalytical Society), which is isolated internationally. This isolation is related to the fact that, even down to its name, the group stands in the tradition of pre-war German psychoanalysis, which required its Jewish members to resign from the Society in 1935 and was dissolved as a group in 1938. From then until 1945, it continued to exist, informally associated with the "German Institute for Psychological Research and Psychotherapy" directed by a cousin of Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring.

After the defeat of National Socialism, neither of the two psychoanalytical associations – the continuing DPG nor the DPV founded in 1950 – showed much inclination or interest in dealing bluntly and self-critically with the problematic history of their discipline in the Nazi period, if one excludes a few isolated attempts to break the wide-spread silence, such as that by the analyst Käthe Dräger<sup>2</sup>. While one side (DPV) cultivated the myth of a "liquidated psychoanalysis" by pretending that there had been no psychoanalysis in Germany during the Nazi barbarism, the other side (DPG) cultivated the myth of "psychoanalysis saved" by pointing to the fact that it was only at the price of compromise with Nazi institutions that psychoanalysis could be car-

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey C. Cocks, *Psyche and Swastika. "Neue Deutsche Seelenheilkunde" 1933-1945*, Los Angeles, 1975; also: *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich*, The Göring Institute, New York, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> Käthe Dräger, "Bemerkungen zu den Zeitumsständen und zum Schicksal der Psychoanalyse und der Psychotherapie in Deutschland zwischen 1933 und 1949", in: Hans-Martin Lohmann (ed.), *Psychoanalyse und Nationalsozialismus. Beiträge zur Bearbeitung eines unbewältigten Traumas*, Frankfurt/Main, 1984, p. 41 ff.